

# socialist standard

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Journal of The Socialist Party of Great Britain - Companion Party of the World Socialist Movement

## Monsters Inc.



## Capitalism and its wars



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# socialist standard

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# Introducing The Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is like no other political party in Britain. It is made up of people who have joined together because we want to get rid of the profit system and establish real socialism. Our aim is to persuade others to become socialist and act for themselves, organising democratically and without leaders, to bring about the kind of society that we are advocating in this journal. We are solely concerned with building a movement of socialists for socialism. We are not a reformist party with a programme of policies to patch up capitalism.

We use every possible opportunity to make

new socialists. We publish pamphlets and books, as well as CDs, DVDs and various other informative material. We also give talks and take part in debates; attend rallies, meetings and demos; run educational conferences; host internet discussion forums, make films presenting our ideas, and contest elections when practical. Socialist literature is available in Arabic, Bengali, Dutch, Esperanto, French, German, Italian, Polish, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish as well as English.

The more of you who join The Socialist Party the more we will be able to get our ideas across, the more experiences we

will be able to draw on and greater will be the new ideas for building the movement which you will be able to bring us.

The Socialist Party is an organisation of equals. There is no leader and there are no followers. So, if you are going to join we want you to be sure that you agree fully with what we stand for and that we are satisfied that you understand the case for socialism.

**If you would like more details about The Socialist Party, complete and return the form on page 23.**



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NOVEMBER 2014

## Editorial

### Foolish protest

SO UKIP have won their first MP, Douglas Carswell, ex-Tory, currency crank and free-marketeer who wants to bash those on benefits even more. Quite how UKIP feel this can appeal to Labour voters is unclear. From a policy point of view, UKIP are still Tories, an external faction of the Tory party, financed by jumped-up, opinionated businessmen who think they can buy themselves into politics.

The trouble is that people don't always think rationally when it comes to protest votes. In these instances they are voting against something – the Labour, Tory and Lib Dem Westminster politicians – not for anything. UKIP voters won't be interested in anything beyond the party's anti-foreigner stance and don't know or couldn't care less what else it says it stands for. Nor would they expect UKIP to carry out its promises if they got into power any more than they expect the other parties to.

There have been protest parties before that have done well at by-elections. That's what the Liberals used to be in the 60s and 70s, and then there was the SDP in the 80s. They attracted people who were put off by the Punch and Judy show between the Tories representing big business and Labour perceived as representing the trade unions, which they saw as reflecting the industrial disputes of the time. The Liberals were a pretty pointless lot but you could hardly describe them as nasty. In fact, in some ways they espoused some decent values such as tolerance.

It's different today. Times are harsher and the protest vote is going to a nasty party. In periods of economic downturn people turn more easily to this kind of party. Nationalist,

protectionist and anti-foreigner views flourish when people, who already mistakenly consider themselves to be a nation, feel economically insecure. They tend to turn to the 'nation-state' to protect them from world market pressures and the competition of other states.

Panic-stricken, the Tories, who stand most to lose from the UKIP protest vote, are trying to compete with UKIP in the anti-immigration and anti-EU stakes. As far as the dominant section of the British capitalist class is concerned, this is a dangerous game. They don't want to withdraw from the vast, single European market, nor to be excluded from taking part in decisions about it. And they see more advantages than disadvantages in the free movement of EU labour. They would be appalled if their favourite party, the Tories, in pursuit of the personal ambitions of its MPs and would-be MPs, manoeuvres itself into a position where they have to campaign for an Out vote in an In/Out EU referendum.

People are right to be discontented and to protest about their situation, but they need to be more discerning and choose the right target. It's not the Westminster politicians, nor the Brussels bureaucracy, nor the East European migrants who are to blame for their plight. It's the world-wide capitalist system of production for profit. That's what they should target. But protesting against it and its effects is not enough. They need to go beyond this and organise politically to bring the whole system to an end and replace it by one in which the resources of the Earth have become the common heritage of all humanity and used to improve the lot of people everywhere.

## The real war to end wars

ATTEMPTING TO explain how a four-dimensional being would view three-dimensional humans, Carl Sagan in *Cosmos* invited us to imagine our 3D selves looking down on beings in a two-dimensional universe. To us they would appear as cut-outs on a flat page, with length and breadth but no height, with no distinction between public and private space, with nothing concealed either inside their bodies or outside. If we tried to talk to these 2D beings, they would be astonished to experience our voice as appearing to them from everywhere at once, both internally and externally and through all their senses, like a ghost from some spirit world.

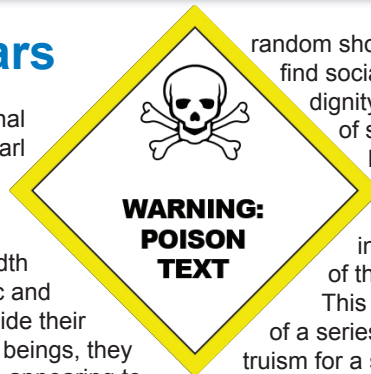
The far-sighted Sagan presented this analogy without the least expectation of it coming true. And yet in a sense it has come true. The internet has made it so.

Now we are all able to look down on the two-dimensional world of the internet screen and speak to it like a god, anonymously, as if from nowhere and everywhere. Simultaneously, we are all trapped in that 2D world, and anyone can look down at us, from above, right into the core of our being. And what is the result? Public and private spheres are now in collision, not just with the hacking of celeb or child nude pictures from cloud storage, not just by government agencies ferreting through our private correspondence, but in even more sinister ways. Now we are seeing inside the skin of humanity, as it were, into the hidden depths, and it's not a pretty sight. Before the internet, communications were largely constrained within the social protocols of politeness and good taste. Nobody imagined that society had an inner beast or if there was, it was confined to a few demented freaks and kept well and truly out of view and behind closed doors. The 'troll' was a being that existed only in nightmares.

Now the lid is off and we are peering in on a panorama of earthly delights redolent of Hieronymus Bosch. This is not what anyone expected. It's not just a case of a few intemperate hotheads firing off 'flame' emails or carelessly worded texts without explanatory 'smileys'. Celebs are leaving Twitter and celeb Twitch gamers are turning off their feedback comments because of the amount of abuse and threats of 'doxing' – having their private information posted online. Sexting has resulted in new laws to prevent 'revenge porn'. In the instantly reactive online environment, a stray word can result in death threats. Presenter Judy Finnegan and her daughter were recently threatened with rape (quite possibly by women) for making the innocuous suggestion that violent rapes were worse than non-violent ones ('Madeley warns trolls over rape threat', *BBC Online*, 16 October). In the GamerGate scandal, in which female games programmers have been terrorised for speaking out against the depiction of women in games, a planned feminist games conference had to be cancelled due to threats of a spree-style massacre ('Feminist video-games talk cancelled after massacre threat', *BBC Online*, 15 October). As tablet-toting children from 9 upwards join in as spectators of cyber delights including hard-core porn, 22 percent of boys aged 12 – 15 and 30 percent of girls report being bullied online, and at least as many know someone who is bullied or has suffered from deliberately embarrassing online exposure ('Call for teens to self-regulate net use', *BBC Online*, 15 October).

Society responds with more new laws to expose trolls by lifting up their stones of anonymity before they can scurry away out of sight. There's no doubt that trolls are nasty pieces of work. Most commentators don't feel the need to explore the question why. Trolls are just a fact of life. Every barrel has a few rotten apples. It's human nature.

In what other familiar reality is it common for bullies to prosper and fear to silence critics? In what circumstances are rape and



random shooting sprees considered normal? Where do we find social agreements torn up, civil rights trashed, human dignity laughed at, intelligence recruited in the service of stupidity, and anger geysering up as if from a limitless well?

We typically find those things in a war.

Looking inside the skin of society, as the internet now allows us to do, we are seeing many of the classic hallmarks of warfare.

This issue of the *Socialist Standard* carries the first of a series on current wars, beginning with ISIS. It's a truism for a socialist to say that capitalism causes war, but as a statement it's not nearly strong enough. It's like saying that football causes knee injuries or that water skiing involves getting wet.

Capitalism *is* war, plain and simple. It's not just market society with a war on top, it's war all the way down, and can only be properly understood as such. Peace is a social myth we have constructed to delude or amuse ourselves in our leisure moments eating rat stew in the trenches.

Nation states, schools and commercial businesses are organised hierarchically, like armies, and we are all reluctant conscripts, squaddies whose task it is to fight whoever we're told to fight, whose received ambition may be to make NCO or officer but whose real ambition, if we're not blinded by patriotism or xenophobia or bloodlust, is to not get killed.

Understanding that capitalism *is* war helps to make sense of the news in a way that nothing else does. Random acts of violence no longer seem random. The fear and the paranoia and the endless search for scapegoats and snake-oil cures become explicable, even predictable. The impotent and irrelevant posturings of politicians are meaningless precisely because they are war propaganda, as bogus as Hollywood fantasies, monarchical pomp or religious preaching. This is not civil society with a few oddballs and quirks, it is society in shellshock, having a continuous mental breakdown.

Obviously this comes as a surprise to a lot of media pundits who fondly imagined society as different from this, and who now search anxiously for reasons, alibis and justifications. But what do well-fed semi-detached liberals know about the anger of the food aid queue and the final demand? It's war, the reality show, and now on prime time and social media for your entertainment.

And where do you fit in? There's no room for shirkers or conshies in this war. You don't have a choice not to fight. If you struggle to make ends meet, you're in the war. If you struggle against disability prejudice, you're in the war. If you feel oppressed by white racists, loud-mouthed bigots, the council, the boss at work, the 'male gaze', you're in the war. You don't have a choice not to fight, but you do have a choice what to fight, and how to fight.

For socialists, the only part of this war that makes any sense, that is worth fighting, that might realistically stand a chance of ending war forever, is the class war, the war against the idea of capitalism itself, the mindset of private property and public poverty, the universal acceptance of oppression. Everyone else is fighting to win, or not lose, or just survive. If we were to win the class war, it would remove the main reason for fighting all the other wars. In socialism, society could finally start to recover from the hell it has put itself through.

There is an upside to the internet's opening of Pandora's Box. Humans are being forced, albeit reluctantly, to face their demons, to acknowledge the real state of affairs instead of paying lip service to ritual, custom and pretence. And capitalism, which traditionally masks its ugliness with these same rituals, is increasingly running out of dark holes to hide in. The faster we are communicating, the more we're beginning to understand, and the more we understand, the sooner we will act.

PJS

Dear Editors

I was very surprised indeed that the SPGB and the *Socialist Standard* did not use the opportunity of the centenary of the start of the First World War to re-publish, and in full, one of what must be one of the most powerful anti-war messages produced by revolutionary socialists, that of the SPGB, published in the September 1914 *Socialist Standard*.

You quite rightly re-published part of it in the October 1939 *Socialist Standard* in response to the start of the Second World War, and I understood the Party was extremely proud of the prose and the revolutionary socialist anti-war message it expressed.

As you have chosen for whatever reason not to re-publish your original anti First World War manifesto, may I have at least part of it re-published in your letters column?

*"Placing on record our abhorrence of this latest manifestation of the callous, sordid and mercenary nature of the international capitalist class, and declaring that no interests are at stake justifying the shedding of a single drop of working class blood, we protest the brutal and bloody butchery of our brothers of this and other lands, who are being used as food for cannon abroad while suffering and starvation are the lot of their fellows at home. We have no quarrel with the working class of any country, we extend to the workers of all lands the expression of our goodwill and socialist fraternity, and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of socialism, The World for the Workers!"*

I note the one good thing the SPGB ever said about the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution was that they took Russia out of the war. The workers and peasants revolution in Russia in November 1917 was surely the single most powerful and most effective anti war action ever taken in modern history.

Does not the fact that the Bolshevik Revolution so clearly and unambiguously pulled Russia out of the First World Slaughter, and published and exposed all the secret treaties and pacts, showing all the dirty connections and inter relationships between apparently hostile imperialist powers, indicate that, perhaps, there was more of a proletarian content to that Revolution than the SPGB has ever felt able to acknowledge?

With very best wishes  
**Andrew Northall (by email)**

## Reply:

There's no doubt the Bolshevik

# The Central Asian Holocaust of the First World War

WAY BACK in the *Socialist Standard* of August 1918 we referred to a 'Mr. Price from Russia itself, in his article in the *Manchester Guardian* for November 28th, 1917, where he describes the cold-blooded slaughter of 500,000 Khirgiz Tartars by the Czar's Government in 1916. And he caustically remarks: "While Western Europe has heard about Armenian massacres, the massacre of the Central Asian Moslems by the Tsar's agents has been studiously hidden."'

Under Tsarist Russian rule, Turkestan was converted to a major cotton-growing region. Cotton cultivation was imposed to compensate for the loss of the US cotton supply in the 1860s due to the American Civil War. The resulting economic development brought some small-scale industry to the region, but the native people of Turkestan were worse off than their Russian counterparts, and the new wealth from cotton was spread very unevenly. On the whole, living standards did not improve, and many farmers became indebted. Cotton price fixing during the First World War made matters worse, a large, landless rural proletariat soon developed, gambling and alcoholism became commonplace, and crime rose considerably. Historian Togan wrote 'after the proliferation of cotton planting in Ferghana [imposed by the Tsarist state at the expense of cereal cultivation] the economic conditions deteriorated'.

On 25 June 1916 the Russian Imperial Decree ordered the compulsory conscription to military service of Muslims in the Central Asian region of Turkestan. This was the beginning of the 'Basmachi' movement or the Turkestan National Liberation movement which was documented by historian and participant Zeki Velidi Togan (1890-1970) who wrote: 'Basmachi is derived from "baskinji" meaning

attacker, which was first applied to bands of brigands. During Tsarist times, these bands existed after Turkestan independence was lost and Russian domination began'.

On 11 July 1916, the first mass protest meeting took place in Tashkent and Russian police fired into the crowd. Arrests and summary executions followed. The Russian settlers, who had been brought into Tashkent some thirty to forty years earlier, began looting, apparently at the instigation of the Russian police. Protest meetings spread to Marghilan, Andijan and Hojend; attacks on Tsarist officials took place in Akkurgan, Akmesjid and Kanjagali. The people of Jizzakh destroyed the railroad at several points. In the middle of August the resistance spread to Ashkhabad, Mervto Akmol, Turgay, Yedisu, Karakul and Chu basin.

The Imperial Russian state declared martial law in Turkestan, and as a concession announced a lower quota of workers to be conscripted under the 25 June decree. Russian generals Kuropotkin and Kalbovo armed the Russian settlers in Central Asia to act as additional military units to reinforce their existing and wellarmed regular forces. Russian generals Ivanov and Rynov moved all their forces against Jizzakh. Fully equipped Russian regiments under General Madridov attacked the people of Khiva region, and according to eyewitnesses, massacred even babies in the cradle. Those who were not killed were stripped of their all possessions. Contemporary reports estimated that between 25 June 1916 and October 1917, some 1.5 million Turkic peoples were killed by the Russian forces and settlers. At least half of the Central Asian livestock was destroyed and an inestimable amount of personal property was looted by the Russian military forces and settlers.

Amadeo Bordiga once pointed out that extermination of peoples 'occurred not at a random moment, but in the middle of a crisis and an imperialist war. It is thus from within this gigantic enterprise of destruction.' This can be seen in the midst of the First World War with the Ottoman Empire's genocide of 1.5 million Armenian people but also the 'Central Asian Holocaust of the Turkic Peoples'.

**STEVE CLAYTON**

Revolution (in reality more of a coup d'état) was carried out by proletarians in the main and it did have the positive effect of taking Russia out of the First World War, as we indeed acknowledged at the time. Set against that though is the legacy of the decades of totalitarian dictatorship that followed, and the mistaken association of this brutal state capitalist regime with 'socialism' and 'communism'. – *Editors*.





## News From Heaven

### The Bishop's Special

*(A blast from the past, from the March 1916 Socialist Standard)*

IN THE January issue of this journal were recorded the statements of the Rev. Father Vaughan anent the reason God did not intervene to stop the war. The unmarried father showed us very clearly that only his—pardon, His—great love prevented Him from doing so. God, like the munition manufacturer and the ship-owner, was drawing good out of the war, and in such circumstances it was not to be expected that the merry mill which the bulk of the world finds so amusing, and which some (not excluding even Bishops, who in this respect are luckier than beershops) find so profitable, would be interfered with by the Divine hand. No, God, who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to be nailed up on a stick, as the only way in which he could prevail upon himself to refrain from strafing the world with fire and brimstone, was certainly not the bloke to prevent his children stirring up one another's vitals with bayonets and other eminently suitable implements. The reverend father led us to that conclusion by ways so logically sound that to most of us he spoke absolutely the last word on the subject.

But after the Roman Catholic Church comes the Catholic Church of England. The Bishop of Chelmsford, speaking at Queen's Hall on the 7th February, in the Day of United Intercession arranged by the World's Evangelical Alliance, stoutly combated (without mentioning names) the claim of the rival show to know all about God and his whys and wherefores.

The Essex bishop, far from ascribing the non-interference of God in this game of butcher my neighbour to boundless love, declares that it is a question of politics. 'God has his politics,' the bishop assures us, 'and would never be an ally of any nation that was not clean.' So the fiat has gone forth. The reason England has not wiped the floor with Germany is that the English are so damned dirty—a bishop has said it.

As between the Romish father and the Anglican bishop, the present writer does not presume to judge. The theory that God so loves the world that he wouldn't for anything save it from self-annihilation, has attractions for the reverent mind; on the other hand, the idea of God as a politician, making known through his agents that cleanliness is one of the planks of his platform, and that, no matter what the demerits of the Germans, he will not ally himself with the itchy and the crumby—that idea is

irresistible to those who dabble in the singularly clean and spotless game of politics.

But after all, these reflections do but touch the fringe of the question. Though Father Vaughan opines that it will take all eternity to thank God for the war, he will agree that it would be a mistake to carry the thing so far that there was no one left alive to thank God for having killed off all the others. He cannot, then, object to the All-loving being persuaded to temper his love with so much of Spartan sternness as will put a stopper on our murderous indulgences. So much for Father Vaughan.

Now the Bishop of Chelmsford tells us that 'God is sitting on the fence,' and plaintively asks, 'how can we get Him to come down on our side and give us a mighty victory?'

Much smaller bugs than bishops are may be permitted to offer suggestions on a subject of such universal interest as getting God to come down off his perch. An old bird-catcher whom I consulted on the off-chance declared 'if yer can't call him down yer must feed him down, and if yer can't feed him down yer must call him down, and if yer can't neither feed him down nor call him down ye'd better try a 'en angel, and if that ain't no good why yer won't never take him up to Club Row.'

But we may reject that advice with scorn. Obviously the first step is to get ourselves clean. 'We must cleanse England,' says the bishop, and he is right. Let's wash our shirts and our shifts; let's scrape ourselves, pumice-atone ourselves, boil ourselves if necessary. Let's co-operate for the job—my Lord Bishop, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours: I'm ready for any dirty job so long as we get the muck off. Then, when we have got



through with that we might pursue the course which has proved so efficacious in the past. We might plaster the fence whereon God is sitting with such announcements as 'Your King and Country Need You'; 'Isn't This Worth Fighting For?' 'What Did You Do, Daddy?' 'Go! Don't be Pushed!' 'I wasn't among the first to go, but I went, thank God, I went.' And if this was followed up by a visit from the recruiting sergeant, or, to stretch a point in view of the greatness of the occasion, from Lord Derby himself, murmuring the magic 'What about it?' we should surely 'get God out of this dilemma,' and 'get him down on our side' (as the bishop 'reverently' and gracefully put it)—unless the irreverent but far-sighted Germans have taken the precaution to lime His perch, in which case, perish me pink, there is a dilemma indeed.

**BILL BAILEY**



## The quest for superprofits

IT CAN'T be often that Karl Marx gets a favourable mention in the *Investors Chronicle*. But he did in its 5 September issue. Chris Dillow, in an article discussing whether or not robotisation would be good for profits and dividends, quoted Marx as pointing out that new, more productive machines not only replace workers but also, as they spread, reduce the value of the older machines still in use. Part of the value of these machines is destroyed through what he called 'moral depreciation' (*Capital*, Vol 1, ch. 15, s.3b).

Dillow's point was that this 'moral depreciation' reduced the value of the firm's capital and so also of shares in it. There is another reason why an investor should steer clear of such firms. A firm with old machines will be less profitable as its machines won't be able to produce its product as cheaply as its competitors who have installed the new machines.

Dillow claims that 'profits come from monopoly power' and, on this assumption, asks 'will new technologies be a source of monopoly power or not?' His answer: yes, at least for a while until the new technology becomes the norm.

In saying this he was pointing out that those firms that first employ a new technology will, because they can produce more cheaply than the average, be able to make an above average profit. This 'superprofit' attracts other firms to adopt the new technology, so bringing the average cost of production down and, with this, the end of the temporary superprofits of the innovating firms.

This is well explained by Ernst Mandel (despite his Trotskyism) in his *Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*:

'... an enterprise or industrial sector with an above average level of productivity ... *economizes* in its expenditure of social labour and therefore makes a surplus profit, that is to say, the difference between its costs and selling prices will be greater than the average profit. The pursuit of this surplus profit is, of course, the driving force behind the entire capitalist economy. Every capitalist enterprise is forced by competition to try to get greater profits, for this is the only way it can constantly improve its technology and labour productivity. Consequently all firms are forced to take this same direction, and this of course implies that what at one time was an above-average productivity winds up as the new average productivity, whereupon the surplus profit disappears. All the strategy of capitalist industry stems from this desire on the part of every enterprise to achieve a rate of productivity superior to the national average and thereby make a surplus profit, and this in turn provokes a movement which causes the surplus profit to disappear, by virtue of the trend for the *average* rate of labour productivity to rise continuously.' ([www.marxists.org/archive/mandel/1967/intromet/index.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/mandel/1967/intromet/index.htm))

So it is not true that 'profit comes from monopoly power'. Profits come from the surplus value produced by the working class. Monopoly power only enables a firm to draw more than average from this pool of surplus value. If monopoly power was the source of profits then if there was none, as in the ideal of so-called 'perfect competition', there would be no profits. Which is absurd. In that situation firms would still be making a profit, only the average with none making a superprofit.

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THE WORLD Health Organization (WHO) now estimates that the Ebola death toll in West Africa had surpassed 4,000—though it warned that the statistics ‘vastly underestimate’ the true scale of the epidemic. Hundreds of health workers have died in Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, three of the countries where the disease has hit particularly hard. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released new estimates that Ebola may infect 1.4 million people in Liberia and Sierra Leone by the end of January. WHO said in a statement:

‘The Ebola epidemic ravaging parts of West Africa is the most severe acute public health emergency seen in modern times. Never before in recorded history has a biosafety level four pathogen infected so many people so quickly, over such a broad geographical area, for so long. The current situation is so dire that, in several areas that include capital cities, many of these common diseases and health conditions are barely being managed at all’ ([commondreams.org/news/2014/09/27](http://commondreams.org/news/2014/09/27)).

Properly called Ebola hemorrhagic fever (EHF), the virus damages the cells it hijacks so badly that victims often bleed from every opening of the body. This epidemic has been compounded by a shortage of health workers and facilities

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim co-authored an article in the *Washington Post* which said that ‘If the Ebola epidemic devastating the countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone had instead struck Washington, New York or Boston, there is no doubt that the health systems in place could contain and then eliminate the disease.’

We have now witnessed the near-panic reaction of some elements of the press as Ebola has indeed broken out in the USA and Spain. All over the world, airports are now screening passengers from affected regions and hospitals drawing up action plans to cope if indeed what some say is inevitable does happen.

Nevertheless, there is a tendency to blame the pathology of the disease (and the victims) for the epidemic. John Ashton, president of the UK Faculty of Public Health, places this crisis in its proper context, explaining ‘We must also tackle the scandal of the unwillingness of the pharmaceutical industry to invest in research to produce treatments and vaccines, something they refuse to do because the numbers involved are, in their terms, so small and don’t justify the investment. This is the moral bankruptcy of capitalism acting in the absence of

an ethical and social framework.’ He said the international community needed to be ‘shamed into real commitment’ to address the ‘poverty and environmental squalor’ in which epidemics can thrive’ ([telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/11010135](http://telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/11010135)).

Previous Ebola outbreaks used to be restricted to the rural areas in poor African countries. In other words, there are no large markets or high profits for the pharmaceutical industry. From a pure business perspective, the Ebola market used to be tiny compared to other viral diseases like influenza. Investors are more interested in a company that can prove it has an effective cure for influenza and sell to the global market for many years. Billions in revenues would be generated annually, driving stock prices far above those that could be achieved via rare diseases like Ebola.

It is not beyond human capacity to contain or defeat Ebola in West Africa since it is

spread primarily by contact with victims and is not as easily contracted as airborne diseases such as SARS. Ebola victims are infectious only when they exhibit the actual debilitating symptoms and then they can be quarantined. In Nigeria due to a more developed health infrastructure, health workers were able to utilise their contact tracing teams, which were originally set up to detect and treat polio, to effectively stop its spread ([theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/oct/07](http://theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2014/oct/07)). Decades of civil war in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea has ensured that their health systems are fractured and in disrepair.

Barack Obama raised in a television interview the worrying scenario that Ebola could mutate and become much more communicable. The virus already exists in at least four forms and it could happen although this need not be a mutation to a more lethal form but can be into a more benign mutation. But let’s imagine that Ebola undergoes a mutation that increases its ability to spread and then let us pretend that it then kills, on average, 40,000 to 50,000 Americans and at least a quarter million people globally every year. Now, for the capitalist class and the pharmaceutical industry, in particular, that is where you invest your money for a healthy (sic) return!

**ALJO**



plus a belated and insufficient response from the international community. A relative handful of courageous medical workers have struggled to control the spread of Ebola and to treat people with the virus. Many of these people have themselves died.

In an article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Doctors Jeremy Farrar and Peter Piot wrote that the epidemic ‘was an avoidable crisis.’ They go on to write ‘We are concerned that without a massive increase in the response, way beyond what is being planned in scale and urgency, alongside the complementary deployment of novel interventions (in particular the use of safe and effective vaccines and therapeutics), it will prove impossible to bring this epidemic under control’ ([commondreams.org/news/2014/09/23](http://commondreams.org/news/2014/09/23)).

Heeding such warnings many nations are sending medical teams and mobilising their militaries to set in place treatment centres.

In a world that is dominated by capitalism, no drug has ever been approved to treat Ebola, and little research has been done although the disease was first identified in 1976. An article in the *New Yorker* explained that ‘diseases that mostly affect poor people in poor countries aren’t a research priority, because it’s unlikely that those markets will ever provide a return’. The





# Reckless in Rochester

THIS WAS not a fertile year for the party conferences what with Ed Miliband in his leader's speech 'forgetting' to mention what Labour

would try to do about the economy and the mess it is in and David Cameron working to make everyone else ignore that the Tory party is having nightmares about mass defections to Nigel Farage and his UKIP. Most prominent among these was Mark Reckless MP for the highly vulnerable seat of Rochester and Strood. Reckless was one of the 2010 intake into the Commons but in so brief a time there he has made himself a name as both a rebel and a 'statesman' – which means he has a talent for adjusting to some of the most threatening aspects of capitalist society. In 1996 and 1997 while employed by the investment bankers UBS Warburg he was rated as one of the top three economists in that breeding ground of such life forms known as the City of London. And another similar rating in 2012 placed him as Conservative back-bencher of the year after he led fifty-three MPs in rebellion against the EU budget. Other issues on which he has stood out include tuition fees, the so-called pasty tax and restricting Child Benefit. On another theme – which may have been more appealing to Farage – he missed voting in a debate on the Budget because he was in a drunken stupor. This was in the small hours: 'I thought it was inappropriate' was how Reckless excused his lapse, which evaded the fact that it happened when he was just two months into his career as an MP and was supposed to be supporting the 2010 budget – Osborne's first contribution to the great Conservative crusade to salvage the British economy.



Above: Mark Reckless. Right: the 'Jack In The Green Sweeps' dance

## Blazing Row

His case for leaving the Tory party was that the leaders were 'not serious about real change in Europe... Britain could do better'. The matter came to a head when he was in a group of MPs at an 'away day' at Cameron's Cotswold home, when the guests were expected to wear casual clothes and, apart from other activities, play football on the house lawn while they composed the manifesto for the next election. Cameron had attacked him (but not on the pitch) over the rumours of his pending departure and a blazing row ensued which left Reckless 'losing faith' in Cameron. Apart from anything else he was reported to be disturbed by the pressure of the Whips on some MPs, at times using knowledge of embarrassing aspects of their private lives. Perhaps this example of our leaders' caring unity was among the titbits served to Reckless when he was taken to lunch in the Members' Dining Room by Chief Whip Michael Gove.

## Clacton

It did not help Reckless make his case against the insincerity of the others when he gave so many assurances that, apart from not moving over to UKIP, he would be prominent in the party's campaign in the Clacton by-election: 'Good to lead coach for Team 2015 campaigning in Birmingham Northfield on Sunday and will be followed by our Clacton action day next Thursday' he announced, although this was at the same time that

he had been busily plotting his changeover with the UKIP defector – and now UKIP MP for Clacton – Douglas Carswell. Typical among the flood of angry responses the chairman of his constituency Party trumpeted that he was '...astonished and disgusted... only 48 hours ago he proclaimed his support for the Conservatives and their plans for a referendum on Europe and he gave me assurances that he wouldn't defect'. This aggravated Reckless' own expectation that he would face an 'enormous personal risk' by changing his party and excused him concealing his intentions because he knew that to reveal it all would unleash 'a media onslaught on me . . . in a vicious, vicious way'. He has yet to explain why his awareness of so aggressive a potential in the Conservative Party did not dissuade him from joining it.

## Shapps

As the rumours swirled and flashed about the intentions of so many Tory MPs (even Stephen Bone, the carelessly right-wing MP for Wellingborough who is famous for publicising his long-suffering wife, muttered an admission on *Have I Got News For You* that he also had thought about defecting) there was a fully primed machinery of abuse and threats ready to go into action. Early, and particularly nasty in this when Reckless eventually came clean was Grant Shapps, the Party Chairman. But he has not been free of controversy himself. Before he got into Parliament he



was accustomed to use the pen name of Michael Green. It was Michael Crick (who was once assaulted by a prominent UKIP member with a loosely rolled-up leaflet) on *Channel Four News* who revealed that Shapps' marketing website about

his business included 'testimonials' from people and businesses who, if they did exist, could not be traced. But this revelation was no deterrent for Shapps as he sounded off in the Reckless affair: 'He has lied and lied and lied again' he bellowed at the Tory faithful '...Today, your trust has been abused. You have been cheated. But worse, the people of Rochester and Strood have been cast aside'. This is part of the very stuff of politics; change the odd word and it could have been Miliband going on about Cameron, or Clegg about Miliband or, at another time, all three about Shapps.

## Rochester

With its cathedral and castle and Cornmarket and so many other such buildings Rochester is an interesting place, a particular favourite of Charles Dickens. On the coast of Kent, it was once a symbol of British naval power and of building the ships which went along with that. Symbolic of something else, it was nearby that the first of the supposedly enlightened penal establishments for youngsters was set up at Borstal. But as shipbuilding declined so did the town; the Chatham dockyard closed in 1984 and unemployment soared in what was feared to be a post-industrial economy. If there has been any kind of easing since then it might have been seen in the revival of the traditional May Day 'Jack In The Green Sweeps' dance. Will there be any relief in the by-election, in the bitter recriminations, the blackmail, the transparently dishonest promises about a better, safer world?

IVAN

# WARS TODAY

## 1: IRAQ AND SYRIA

*The first of a series of three articles on wars currently going on in different parts of the world.*

It was the fall of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city with a population of about two million people, to the army of the Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) on 9 June 2014 that propelled the name of ISIS into the global consciousness. The fall of this strategic city on the crossroad between Syria and Iraq was seen as a turning point, and clear evidence that the war in Syria had spread into Iraq. In Mosul, ISIS captured government offices, the airport, police stations, the Central Bank holding 500 billion newly-printed dinars (equivalent to \$430 million or €308 million), military equipment such as Black Hawk helicopters, Humvees, thousands of guns and ammunition rounds, and they freed from prison 2,500 Islamist fighters. It is estimated that ISIS which now controls swathes of first Syria and now Iraq has about \$2 billion in its war chest.

On 29 June ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed the new Caliphate and changed its name to Islamic State (IS). This new Islamic State is expanding by the day and now covers an area larger than Great Britain and inhabited by at least six million people. Baghdadi declared the Syrian city of Raqqa the capital and in celebration IS paraded a captured Scud ballistic missile in the streets of Raqqa. Baghdadi proclaimed 'Rush O Muslims to your state. It is your state. Syria is not for Syrians and Iraq is not for Iraqis. The land is for the Muslims, all Muslims. This is my advice to you. If you hold to it you will conquer Rome and own the world, if Allah wills' (*Washington Times* 2 July). Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, picked his pseudonym for its



resonance with the first Caliph in AD 632 also called Abu Bakr, the first ruler after the death of Mohammed.

### Sykes-Picot is dead

Patrick Cockburn in the *London Review of Books* (21 August) claims that 'the birth of the new state is the most radical change to the political geography of the Middle East since the Sykes-Picot Agreement was implemented in the aftermath of the First World War.' In fact it is safe to say that as the Druze leader in Lebanon said to correspondent

Robert Fisk of the *Independent* (13 June): 'Sykes-Picot is dead' considering that IS bulldozed the berm ('berm' is a level space, shelf, or raised barrier separating two areas) dividing Syria and Iraq which was the 'border' based on the 1916 Sykes-Picot demarcation of Arab lands, those artificial, arbitrary boundaries imposed by western capitalism. Cockburn concluded that 'a new and terrifying state has been born.' So, what had begun in Tunisia and Egypt, the so-called 'Arab Spring' as movements for economic and social reform has been well and truly



hijacked by the Caliphate of the Islamic State. On 29 September Canon Andrew White, the Vicar of Baghdad who runs the last Anglican church in Iraq, posted on Facebook 'ISIS are now just 5 miles away from Baghdad.'

IS are not something from TE Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*; 'a Bedouin raiding party that appears dramatically from the desert, wins spectacular victories and then retreats to its strongholds leaving the status quo little changed' (Cockburn). IS are a military force capable of waging war on three fronts – south towards Baghdad in Iraq, west to Aleppo in Syria, and north and east towards Kurdish territories. On 2 August IS had also invaded Lebanon and was only pushed back into Syria after a five-day battle. IS is a religiously reactionary organisation, fundamentally anti-working class, which believes that the world's Muslims should live under one Islamic state, a capitalist state ruled by Sharia law.

IS have taken over the capitalist state structure in occupied Syria and Iraq, efficiently running public services, administrative and military control systems, taking over banks, ministries, law courts and operating a taxation system which demands less than Assad's Syrian government. IS effectively secure the water, flour and hydrocarbon resources of an area, centralising distribution, providing services, such as supplying bread, and activities including Koran classes for children, all run by 'an effective management structure of mostly middle-aged Iraqis' (*New York Times*, 27 August). IS control of Syria's and Iraq's oilfields has added wealth to its funds, it exports about 9,000 barrels of

oil per day at prices ranging from about \$25-\$45, some of this goes to Kurdish middlemen up towards Turkey, some goes for domestic IS consumption and some goes to the Assad regime in Syria. With grim irony only possible in capitalism IS 'has also secured revenue by selling electricity back to the Syrian government from captured power plants' (*New York Times*, 11 June).

### Military effectiveness

The military effectiveness of IS has been possible because IS has established a military command of former Iraqi Army officers from Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime which had been overthrown by the US military in 2003. These officers include two Colonels, Adnan al-Sweidawi and Fadel al-Hayali, from Saddam's army. But more telling is that Field Marshall Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, who was Saddam Hussein's Deputy of the Revolutionary Command Council, the ultimate decision making body in Iraq before the 2003 invasion, has been pointed out as one of the main commanders responsible for successful takeovers of North Iraq and the city of Mosul in June. It was reported that fellow Ba'ath generals Azhar al-Obeidi and Ahmed Abdul Rashid had been appointed as governors of Mosul and Tikrit. Izzat al-Douri is the most high profile Ba'athist official to successfully evade capture after 2003, he was the 'king of clubs' in the infamous most-wanted Iraqi pack of playing cards. After Saddam's execution in 2006 he became leader of the now banned Ba'ath Party. IS have the support of many Ba'ath Party loyalists, former intelligence officers and soldiers in Saddam's

Mr Erdogan [President of Turkey] questioned the motives of the anti-Isis allies and accused them of meddling in the region's affairs for the past century. "Do you think they come for peace, with their planes and their missiles?" he asked an audience at Marmara University, Istanbul. "No," he said. "They do it to get the petrol wells under their control" (*Times*, 14 October).

Republican Guard. This explains the battlefield success of IS, it is in effect a hybrid of Sunni insurgent rebels and a Ba'athist organised army. This combination of internationalist Islamic theocracy and the Bonapartist Arab nationalist secularism of Ba'athist Army officers rests on 'not the revolutionary, but the conservative peasant' (Marx 18<sup>th</sup> *Brumaire*), and is a heady capitalist mix for the Middle East.

Respect MP George Galloway pointed out that 'ISIL could not survive for five minutes if the tribes in the west of Iraq rose up against them' (*Guardian*, 26 September). Largest sections of the Sunni Arab working class and peasantry in Iraq and Syria support Islamic State because IS promises them preferential treatment and better economic opportunities than they could ever hope for under the current Shia-dominated leadership in Iraq and Syria. Since 2003 economic deprivation has hit the Sunni Arab faction hard since it lost its former dominant position in society and the Sunni has now become the most oppressed section of Iraqi society and many ended up unemployed and



even destitute. The Sunni peasantry has been hit hard by a series of poor harvests and food shortages in the last ten years which is ironic since Iraq is in the Mesopotamian fertile crescent of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates but it has suffered severe agricultural decline, neglect and conflict. Agricultural productivity declined by a devastating 90 percent after the 2003 war, and there have been six years of the driest winters since 2004. Once a major exporter, Iraq is now reliant year-round on food imports while many Sunnis have been working hard on the land, and yet struggling to

of the ritual and the true faith and to appropriate in recompense the treasures of the renegades' (*MECW* Volume 27).

### Financial support

Before IS gained access to oilfields in Syria and Iraq and later banks in Mosul, wealthy members of ruling families in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Persian Gulf countries provided financial support laundered through the compliant Kuwaiti banking system. IS also benefited from money smuggled via a Turkish border left deliberately unchecked. The then

only way you are going to get rid of the foreign jihadis is if the Sunni tribes and the Ba'athists do it themselves. If your answer is to start bombing ISIS in Iraq then what you are actually doing is bombing the tribes and the Ba'athists who are exactly the people you are going to need to get rid of ISIS' (*Guardian*, 25 September).

The capitalist Islamic State is an organisation, it is even a 'state', and is a hundred times larger and better organised than the al-Qaida of Osama bin Laden. IS are insurgents not terrorists, al-Qaida did not attempt to

solve the economic problems of the Muslim working class and relied on international terrorist acts which can only be described as 'propaganda of the deed' and did nothing for the Muslim working class. IS on the other hand are securing ground, creating a localised state structure and ensuring peasant and working class support through palliatives to the capitalist system shrouded in a theocratic conservatism. However, reforms to capitalism cannot solve the problems facing the working

class regardless of whether the capitalist class wear ties or turbans. In the Middle East the ideology of the capitalist class opposed to western capitalism is now dominated by Islamic fundamentalism whereas in the recent past it was a leftist Arab nationalism rooted in state capitalism such as Nasser in Egypt, the Ba'athist regimes in Syria and Iraq, and the PLO supported by the Russian state-capitalist bloc.

As for IS even Jonathan Powell, Blair's former chief of staff says 'ISIS is not a small movement of middle-class kids like Baader-Meinhof. It's a big political movement like ETA or the IRA which represents a genuine political strand of grievance' (*Guardian*, 22 September).

Socialists are minded to agree with Engels who wrote 'All these movements are clothed in religion but they have their source in economic causes; and yet, even when they are victorious, they allow the old economic conditions to persist untouched' (*MECW* Volume 27).

**STEVE CLAYTON**

*Next month: the war in Ukraine.*



eat but perceiving metropolitan Shias in Baghdad and the east to be living in luxury. Thus IS have been successfully recruiting mostly young Sunni men who are poor, unemployed, lacking education and underprivileged.

The religious strictures applied by IS are also attractive to Iraqi Sunnis as the adherence to conservative conventions, and the clarity and simplicity of Sharia law always appeals to downtrodden peoples who tend to prefer robust law and order to instability. This and resentment of metropolitan Shias is reminiscent of what Engels wrote in 1894: 'Islam is a religion adapted to Orientals, especially Arabs, i.e., on one hand to townsmen engaged in trade and industry, on the other to nomadic Bedouins. Therein lies, however, the embryo of a periodically recurring collision. The townspeople grow rich, luxurious and lax in the observation of the 'law'. The Bedouins, poor and hence of strict morals, contemplate with envy and covetousness these riches and pleasures. Then they unite under a prophet, a Mahdi, to chastise the apostates and restore the observation

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki stated 'we hold Saudi Arabia responsible for the financial and moral support given to ISIS' (*Daily Telegraph*, 17 June) although German Development Minister Gerd Mueller said 'who is arming, who is financing ISIS troops. The keyword there is Qatar' (*Reuters*, 20 August). Günter Meyer, Director of the Center for Research into the Arabic World at the University of Mainz writes 'the most important source of ISIS financing to date has been support coming out of the Gulf states, primarily Saudi Arabia but also Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates' (*Deutsche Welle*, 19 June).

The Western capitalist powers, now with the support of Persian Gulf monarchies, are engaged in military air strikes against IS in Iraq and Syria but there are some sane political voices even amongst bourgeois politicians such as backbench Tory MP Adam Holloway who pointed out 'This is a political problem. ISIS in Iraq are Sunni tribesmen who were fed up with the Maliki government. They are international jihadis and they are former Ba'ath regime elements. The





*'I grow old ... I grow old ...  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled'  
was how J. Alfred Prufrock intended to manage senility. But it was to be properly  
unchallenging:  
'Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach'.*

# Beside the seaside

**P**addling at the tide's edge, dressed in a style as might once have been admired, enjoying some rare luxury of tropical fruit. It was a day free from the stresses of the workplace, some slight easing of glum fears about the butt end of the days. Then dozing in a beach chair briefly unworried about the call to catch the coach back to the *yellow fog rubbing its back on window panes and the pools which stand in drains*. Late in 1949 as the nights drew in a married couple stared out from a bench on the sea front at Folkestone in Kent, where they had bought a small hotel called The Rhodesia. Sitting there that day they worried together about how they would survive as the hotel bookings fell off during the winter. Until the woman gave voice to what was obvious – at that moment they were among people who were too old for employment and who therefore did not have to go

back home as the blinds were drawn on the summer season. Their hotel could survive in profit by offering pensioners the choice of a cheaper package holiday when the resort was quiet. It was in 1951 that Saga Holidays, based in that same sea front town, came to life.

That man was Sidney De Haan who had long nursed an ambition to buy a seaside hotel – perhaps from his earliest employment as a chef in London and then when he was a prisoner of war in Poland under orders to escort some sick prisoners who were being repatriated. In truth this period was not unblemished as preparation for his future; during his time as a prisoner he was repeatedly in punishment for 'insubordination' – although which side he was insubordinate to is not known. In 1951 he faced different demands and priorities which encouraged him to reveal a keen talent for the

manipulative art of what came to be known as market research. Perhaps drawing on what he had learned from getting those prisoners back he travelled the country looking for a place where he could rely on filling a regular coach service to Folkestone. When he found what he was looking for in Yorkshire he opened a service of regular trips from there to The Rhodesia hotel for bargain, all inclusive holidays. The result was an explosive growth in business, which spread across the country and then to hotels and resorts abroad. And now Saga is big time, selling holidays and tours around the world. It owns cruise ships and hotels and sells insurance for a wide range of what are called risks, financial advice, healthcare, direct mail trade. There is also their biggest-selling *Saga Magazine* which claims a readership of over a million.

## Roger

Sidney De Haan retired in 1984, passing control of Saga to his eldest son Roger who left the company in 2004 after selling off its hotels and then himself moving into financial services and insurance. A management take-over of Saga backed by the private equity company Charterhouse yielded the De Haans a profit of £1.35 billion. This at a time when Folkestone was suffering from the decline of the



Kentish coal mines, from losing the ferry trade to the Channel Tunnel and the competition of cheaper air fares and package holidays. In the eastern part of the town – described by De Haan as ‘the slum area around the harbour’ – there was one of the country’s lowest rated secondary schools under the dreaded ‘special measures’ performing the third worst in the country. Two wards in Folkestone are among the ten highest occurrences of pregnancy among the age group 15 to 17. The 2011 Census revealed that respondents in the town considered their health to be significantly lower than the national average. It was symptomatic that Folkestone was part of a constituency where UKIP could benefit from any rampant dissatisfaction with the big parties and became of interest to Nigel Farage until he inflicted himself on Thanet South. The town was apparently in terminal decline until De Haan bought up the harbour for £11 million with the intention to revive it with new shops and premises to be known as a Creative Foundation. There has been a response to this. In August the beach was swarming with people hopefully wielding buckets and spades as they dug in the sand for gold bars which had been buried there by a visiting artist. This year’s Triennial art festival included the re-opening of the previously dilapidated Payers Park. It was all part of the intention to create another Barcelona presumably to be unaffected by the devastating Spanish recession as well as free

super pricey footballers and the feather-fingered pickpockets along Las Ramblas.

## Distress

Meanwhile in 2013 Saga became a public limited company – Saga PLC – with its share price quoted, with a varying response, on the Stock Exchange. This aroused some arch comments from media financial and investment specialists but the overall result, typically in the present

recession, was rather less successful than previously. Saga holidaymakers, anxious not to jeopardise their pensions, were intrigued but not wildly tempted. To judge from the prevailing popular subjects and style of discussion in hotel lounges and on the terraces they are now enjoying some unexpected consolations from being old. These spring from the assumption that vital components in working class life such as employment, health, a stable home, were more accessible to them when they were younger and employed than they are now for the generation who have replaced them in the workforce but do not yet qualify by age for a Saga holiday. This is not because the pensioners had any special skills or fortitude; all in all it expresses the particular passage in the economy which capitalism is going through. As a result, young workers who have a range of experience, educational qualifications and expectations which would once have given them some confidence about their immediate future on the labour market, and all the stress that goes with it, are now cruelly thrust onto an unimpressed and unwelcoming labour market to moulder in bewildered distress.

## Revenge

But those hotel discussions too often take comfort that all of this is a kind of revenge for those infamous drunken evenings in places like Magaluf. This can often override the pensioners’ memories of their

own very real, hard struggle which, although different in detail from what is being experienced by younger people now, was nevertheless demanding and terrifying. The elements of working class oppression change with time but the basic realities remain. Meanwhile it is hard, in those terraces and lounges, to listen to opinions which allow no acknowledgement of those realities. Even when it is soothed by an ‘entertainment’ which can be as outworn and tiresome as music from Victor Sylvester.

## Questionnaire

So what of those who work for Saga? The holiday reps? Overall they perform as mature, patient and hard-working. Amid the customary stress of expectant – very often demanding – holidaymakers they manage to stay placid and confident. Ask them about their job and if they enjoy it?

*Most definitely. Yes.*

What was their work before they joined Saga?

*Er...marketing, office admin ...felt like getting something different to do...*

Were these responses spontaneous or rehearsed? The replies of Saga employees to a questionnaire on *The 10 best things about working at Saga* provides some clues, not always comforting:

*the fact you receive Quarterly business presentations from the CEO himself as he updates staff on how Saga is growing...*

*the fact that there are constant goals and I’m always working hard to achieve my targets set ...*

*If you can’t get to grips with selling a product they will provide you with 1-on-1 training to get you back on track ...*

When the De Haans were huddling on the sea front at Folkestone that day did they ever experience any awareness that holidays are commodities, designed and produced to be bought and sold and with all that follows by way of being contributive to capitalist society where all wealth has that character? We can have access only by buying them, which is subject to influence by the current situation in capitalism at large. It is all part of the system’s repression and manipulation of our lives. Paddling at the tide-line or gazing out at the sea can be recommended as relaxing and can induce a reflective frame of mind, to reveal something vital even to the extent of our holidays. Well worth rolling our trousers for.

**IVAN**



# Tory bluster about

## ‘Human Rights’

The Tories are hard at work trying to reaffirm their reputation as the Stupid Party. In an imbecilic and shambolic fashion, they have announced they intend to repeal the Human Rights Act (HRA) and replace it with a British Bill of Rights. Even further, they are threatening to renounce the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) and withdraw from the treaty. Noticeably, they only sent their press release announcing the move to the Fleet Street tabloids, ignoring the broadsheet press. The draft document was then found to be error-strewn and ill-thought out.

When their document became available legal minds across the internet immediately began to pick it apart, showing up inaccuracies and ignorant comments scattered throughout. It claims, for instance, that the European Court of Human Rights has banned whole life sentences: when in fact all it did was say that there must be a mechanism for review of the sentence (and, indeed, the British Supreme Court has since said it believes sufficient such structures are already in place).

It has been pointed out that narrowing the ability of courts to read legislation in such a way as to make it compatible with human rights (as they are obliged to do under the HRA) would lead to courts striking down legislation more often. They also promised to stop British courts being bound by Strasbourg rulings, when they are already not. Just as all courts have always done, they listen to rulings and reasoning from other jurisdictions and use it as part of their own reasonings.

It has also been suggested that the Westminster Parliament alone might not have the power to repeal the HRA or withdraw from the ECHR, because the devolved bodies for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have had these documents incorporated into their foundation (in the case of Northern Ireland, this is underpinned by an international treaty).

Former Attorney General, Dominic Grieve, who has been booted out of the government for opposing



*The Nuremberg Trials, a catalyst for post-war European human rights legislation.*

this policy, has written in *Prospect Magazine* pointing out that since 1815 the UK has signed up to over 800 treaties that commit to some sort of international arbitration, and the ECHR is just one of those. Far from the EHCR undermining political sovereignty of Britain, it in fact entirely relies upon the sovereign British state entering into and agreeing to uphold treaty obligations.

The power to make treaties is an executive power (or, in the byzantine world of the British state, a matter of Crown prerogative). It is thus part of the anti-democratic aspect of the state. The Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary can negotiate, practically

in secret and bind the state in the eyes of the world. Necessarily, this limits what Parliament can and can't do since it means that Britain cannot pass legislation that would break its obligations to other countries. This is the basic means by which Britain has entered into the European Union, and all European Law is actually a treaty obligation which is given effect by the British Parliament passing compatible legislation.

As Grieve notes, 'in promoting the Convention and adhering to it, we have followed a long tradition that has seen our national self-interest bound up in promoting international order.' That is, British capitalists benefit from promoting international order and transparent processes to protect their property rights and investments.

### The rights of property

The ideology of capitalists has always been based around contract, as they seek to mediate both competition between themselves and against other classes in society. In particular, in their battle with the absolutist states of feudalism they sought protection in the language of rights to protect their

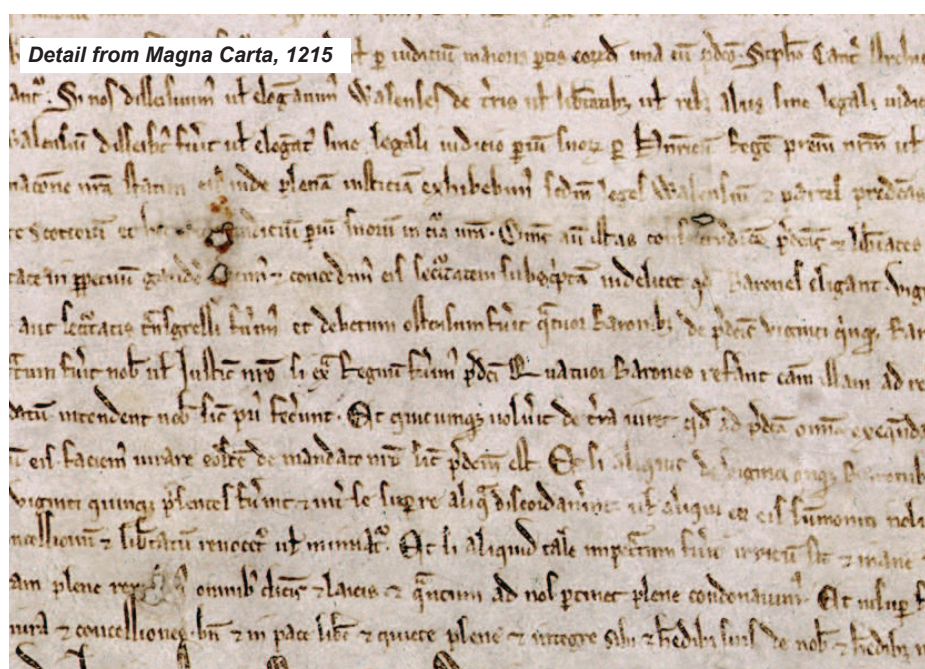




property and business interests. In today's world, they still have to protect themselves from arbitrary expropriation by state actors (and also from other capitalists reneging on their obligations). The interest of big British business depends on a stable rights-based world, where contracts can be enforced. We need only look at Russia, where rival groups of capitalists have used the state to imprison their rivals (and indeed, have frequently resorted to British courts to try and resolve their differences).

Codified human rights are a way of ensuring that the state cannot be used by rival factions (and also so that state actors can know what they are supposed to be doing). That is the function of rights within the ruling class. Rights, though, also form a sort of peace treaty between the ruling capitalist class and the working class. Rather than fight in the ditches over every single scrap, rights allow us and them to let routine matters of conflict be resolved. Their state gets to operate in a way which is considered broadly fair by the wider population. When it doesn't, then open fighting resumes (usually in the form of riots, strikes and civil disruption, but also at the ballot box). The enunciation of civil rights and their enforcement is a reflection of the balance of class power.

This can be seen in the history of every significant document of rights. The Twelve Tables of Rome, the Muslim Constitution of Medina, Magna Carta: all were created following a period of civil strife as a means of putting an end to the present conflict (and also leaving the existing social structures in place).



What this means in practice is that rights are not essential, universal or transhistorical, they are always the outcome of the social relations in a particular society and the relative strengths of the class forces to enforce them. The 1936 constitution of the USSR was touted as the most democratic on Earth (as, indeed it was, on paper). The fact that it was completely ignored and useless in practice was down to the lack of any independent capacity of the population, and the working class, to demand it be lived up to.

Human Rights are an outgrowth of both the competitive class and social division of society and the existence of the state. Just as people who do not keep lions do not need a set of written lion safety manuals, so a society of free individuals without a state will not need a written set of state safety manuals. Instead of

rights on paper, we would have the practical fulfillment of human needs with the equal access to sufficient democratic power to secure those needs.

### Window-dressing

The Tories know that this is just bluster and window dressing. They cannot effectively remove the rights in the ECHR. The games they are playing are just symbolic efforts to shore up a right-wing coalition. The number of times they fulminate against Traveller sites and planning laws in their document on the British Bill of Rights shows that they are mostly interested in addressing the grievances of people who are big fish in small village ponds (the sort who may vote UKIP because they don't have big businesses that rely on international stability).

At most, they are seeking to bring control of the law back into the hands of British judges, who share cultural and family relations with the domestic capitalist class, and can be relied upon more than foreign judges to support the interests of the ruling elite. These judges, though, have already shown a willingness to incorporate human rights language wholesale into common law, and have made significant rights based rulings without reference to either HRA or the ECHR.

We should not let ourselves depend on these judges for our freedoms, though. We can defend ourselves and protect what freedoms and rights we have best by building our own movement for socialism and pursuing the class struggle through our unions. We can only ever have the rights we fight for and can defend.

**PIK SMEET**





# But is it really Capitalism?

*Can it truly be the case that capitalism no longer exists? We examine some claims along these lines.*

**S**ocialists argue that the dominant economic system today is capitalism, characterised by class ownership of the means of production, wage labour and commodity production. A very small part of the population (perhaps just one percent) own and control the land, factories, offices, raw materials, patent rights and so on. These people form the capitalist class, and the rest of the adult population – the working class – have to sell their working abilities for wages in order to live. Goods and services are produced for the sake of profit, hence the general rule of ‘no profit, no production’.

At the same time there are those, mainly on the so-called political ‘right wing’, who claim that what exists nowadays in much of the ‘developed’ world is not really capitalism at all. Let’s leave aside those who consider that present-day society is socialism or some strange mixture of socialism and capitalism. Instead we shall focus on those who use some such term as ‘corporate’ or ‘crony capitalism’ to describe the social system. Underlying this is a claim, sometimes explicit, that everything

would be fine if we could get back to ‘proper capitalism’ rather than the ill-functioning spin-off that has taken its place.

There is no doubt that capitalism has undergone a number of changes since, say, the late eighteenth century, when Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations*, changes surveyed in Ha-Joon Chang’s *Economics: The User’s Guide*. In Smith’s day, most capitalist firms and factories were owned by individual capitalists or small partnerships, people who were closely involved in supervising production and, for instance, individually combatting strikes. Nowadays, factories, offices, etc are mostly the property of companies, which are themselves owned by large numbers of shareholders; as one example, Superdrug is wholly owned by the Hong Kong-based Hutchison Whampoa, which has a number of other brands too. Corporations now are often huge, with Walmart, for instance, having over two million employees. With lots of different competing firms, eighteenth-century capitalism supposedly knew far more competition than today, when

in some cases a small number of companies are enormously powerful in particular areas (as with Amazon and Boeing in ebooks and aircraft, respectively). The state, too, has a much larger role now, with everything from regulation of competition to the welfare system and investment in infrastructure. But the question is to what extent these changes have altered the basic nature of the economy.

One writer who distinguishes between capitalism and corporatism is Michael Labeit (see [www.economicpolicyjournal.com/2009/11/explaining-difference-between.html](http://www.economicpolicyjournal.com/2009/11/explaining-difference-between.html)). In his view of the world, capitalism is based on the recognition of individual rights, including that to private property; hence theft and murder are illegal. Capitalism involves the free market, ‘the vast network of voluntary exchanges of property titles to intermediate and final goods’.

Under corporatism, in contrast: ‘the government intervenes aggressively into the economy, typically with political instruments that benefit large corporations and

*Capitalism - alive  
and well in  
Canary Wharf*



enterprises to the detriment of smaller businesses and private citizens. ... corporatist authorities seize control of land and capital goods when they feel it is necessary to do so without regard for private property rights.'

Subsidies, tariffs, anti-trust laws and licences are all seen as examples of government working in the interests of large companies and so against the interests of small capitalists and 'ordinary' people. Note that corporatism and government interference do not mean state ownership.

Here is another, very sanitised, depiction of 'genuine capitalism' (from [www.againstcronycapitalism.org](http://www.againstcronycapitalism.org)):

'Capital is invested by individuals to further ideas and enterprises that the investor thinks will create a return on the money invested. If the enterprise in question is a good one, both investor and business owner win. If not – better luck next time.'

*The Economist* (15 March) developed a crony-capitalism index, focussing on industries that are particularly vulnerable to monopoly or to heavy state involvement, such as banking, defence, infrastructure and energy. They looked at how rich the billionaires in these crony sectors were, as a percentage of GDP. Top by some margin was Hong Kong, followed by Russia, Malaysia and Ukraine. Britain was only fifteenth, the US seventeenth, China nineteenth and France twentieth. Apparently, 'French and German billionaires ... rely rather little on the state, making their money largely from retail and luxury brands.' As the magazine pointed out, the data were not always reliable, so the precise results needed to be treated with caution. And the claim of people like Labeit is that the economy as a whole, and not just particular sectors, is subject to cronyism.

So is there any real difference between crony or corporate capitalism and 'the real thing'? As far as the working class are concerned, the answer has to be, very little. All forms of capitalism involve wage labour and exploitation, and it is of minimal relevance for workers to what extent a capitalist company depends on government interference. And of course all companies benefit from the government's defence of private property and class rule, its anti-worker legislation and its fighting of wars to protect trade routes and access to markets and raw materials.

The descriptions we have cited above all focus on the capitalist class and how they obtain their wealth, whether simply by investment or by relying on government facilitating their profit-making (by licenses, zoning, import duties or whatever). None of them recognise workers and their unpaid labour as the source of the wealth of the capitalists, or the role of exploitation in profit-making. Big capitalists no doubt exercise more sway with the state than smaller ones, but that should not make us feel sorry for the latter, or accept that they have the same interests as workers. Those who criticise corporatism can be seen as standing for the interests of the owners of small businesses (a point that has also been made about the Tea Party movement in the US).

And what of the free market? Many leftist economic commentators have argued that the recession which started in 2007–8 came about because of the free market and the unregulated nature of the financial industry. Thus Seumas Milne of the *Guardian* wrote in 2008 that 'it is the free-market model, not capitalism, that is dying'. But the view of those discussed here is that the market prior to then was not truly free, as there was plenty of government regulation. This position, however, inevitably leads to the conclusion that there never has been a free market, since government has always defended the interests of the capitalist class as a whole: in 1700, for instance, the British

**continued page 22**



## More on profits

CHRIS DILLOW'S article on 'Robot Dangers' raises other issues about profits. Noting that 'profits don't come merely from being able to produce goods cheaply' but that 'you have to sell these goods', he asks:

'And if millions of people are out of work, who will you sell to? In theory, therefore, robots aren't good for profits and might be disastrous for them.'

This is the old one about mechanisation causing continually rising unemployment. It hasn't happened in practice, though it could theoretically. It doesn't happen if capital accumulation continues and the extra demand for labour it entrains rises faster than the displacement of labour by machines. This is what has happened in the past. So, Dillow's investors needn't worry too much on that score.

After noting that technology has been eliminating many routine white-collar jobs in recent years, Dillow continues:

'... this process has not been accompanied by rising aggregate profits. Office for National Statistics data show that returns on capital have fallen since the late 1990s. this is not merely because of the recession; profit rates were lower in 2007 than in 1997. In this sense, the IT boom has lowered profit rates.'

It is true that profits rates do tend to fall at the end of a boom but Dillow's conclusion here seems rather daring, especially as aggregate profits are not the same as profit rates and can go up even if rates go down.

Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Marx and even Keynes discerned a tendency for the rate of profit to fall in the long run, even though they offered different reasons.

Marx's explanation was linked to increasing mechanisation. He argued that as profit came only from that part of capital invested in productive wage-labour and that as mechanization meant that the part of capital invested in buildings, machines and materials grew faster, there would be a long-run tendency for the rate of return on total capital to fall.

Perhaps surprisingly (or perhaps not, as he mentions that he has read Marxian economist Andrew Kliman), Dillow takes Marx's view:

'According to the standard work on historic economic data (Mitchell's *British Historical Statistics*), the UK's capital stock rose by a factor of almost 11 between 1850 and 1938 whereas profits rose by a factor of less than seven. Ninety years of massive technical progress – the Bessemer process, electrification, combustion engines, telegraph, radios and so on – saw profits fall.' (He means the rate of profit).

He apologises to his investor readers for seeming 'a little dystopian', but they needn't worry too much about this since robotisation reducing the rate of profit to zero is only a theoretical limit and in any event would be years and years away. Well before that, they will have something more urgent to worry about – a growing socialist movement aiming to end the profit system altogether.

Dillow ends by posing a very pertinent question:

'What's at stake here is a matter of utmost importance: how can we ensure that technical progress benefits everyone rather than just a minority, while encouraging that progress?'

Easy. Make the means for producing wealth the common property of everyone instead of just a minority. Since people would then no longer depend on wages to live but would have free access to what they needed, robotisation wouldn't deprive anyone of a living but would just reduce the work load all round.



## Barnsley: Working Class Culture in the Tarn

BARNSLEY'S HISTORY has been dominated by the glass industry and coal mining but marked by disasters that befell the working class such as the 1838 Huskar pit disaster when 26 children were killed, and in 1866 the worst pit disaster in England at Barnsley Oaks when 361 miners were killed.

The Barnsley Museum at Barnsley Town Hall is well worth a visit and showcases Barnsley's coal mining history, with many artefacts from the class struggle that was the 1984-85 Miners' Strike such as an Orgreave police riot shield. The museum also houses the NUM Yorkshire Area North Gawber Branch banner 'from darkness into light' i.e. 'socialism' via various reforms such as nationalisation and 'employment for all'.

**Barnsley Town Hall**



British cinema is represented by the 1969 Ken Loach film *Kes* filmed in Barnsley, based on the novel *A Kestrel for a Knave* by Barnsley writer Barry Hines. This working class film publicised as 'They beat him. They deprived him. They ridiculed him. They broke his heart. But they couldn't break his spirit' starred Dai Bradley, a non-professional from Barnsley. The 1996 film *Brassed Off* filmed in Grimethorpe near Barnsley was set during the pit closures programme of the John Major Tory government in 1992 when 31 out of 50 remaining deep mines faced closure with the loss of 31,000 jobs. In 1980-81 Grimethorpe Colliery had produced 1.2 million tonnes of coal. Barnsley is famous for Charlie Williams, the son of a Barbadian and a Barnsley girl, who was a miner and footballer at Upton colliery then joined Doncaster Rovers in 1948, and was later the first black comedian on British TV in the 1970s.

*It's just like watching Brazil* is an exhibition about Barnsley Football Club, founded in 1887, nicknamed the 'tykes' with a motto of 'spectemur agendo!' ('let us be seen together in action!') from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and an emblem of a glass-blower and miner. Barnsley were FA Cup winners in 1912 but the exhibition title is from the 'cherished 1996-97 season' when Barnsley were promoted to the Premiership. In March 2014 Barnsley football supporters would unfurl an Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign banner '30 Years of Lies, No Justice, No Peace, Never Forget, Never Forgive' at the Oakwell ground. Tommy Taylor, according to John Roberts in *The Team That Wouldn't Die: The Story of the Busby Babes* learned his skills in Barnsley on 'the bog, a rock-hard piece of ground where local boys played in clogs, pit boots or bare feet.' Taylor worked in the pit, then aged 15 signed to Barnsley as a ground-staff boy, and in 1948 his weekly wage

was £2, 8s, 1d. He was signed for a transfer fee of £29,999 to Matt Busby's Manchester United but was later killed in the 1958 Munich Air Crash aged 26.

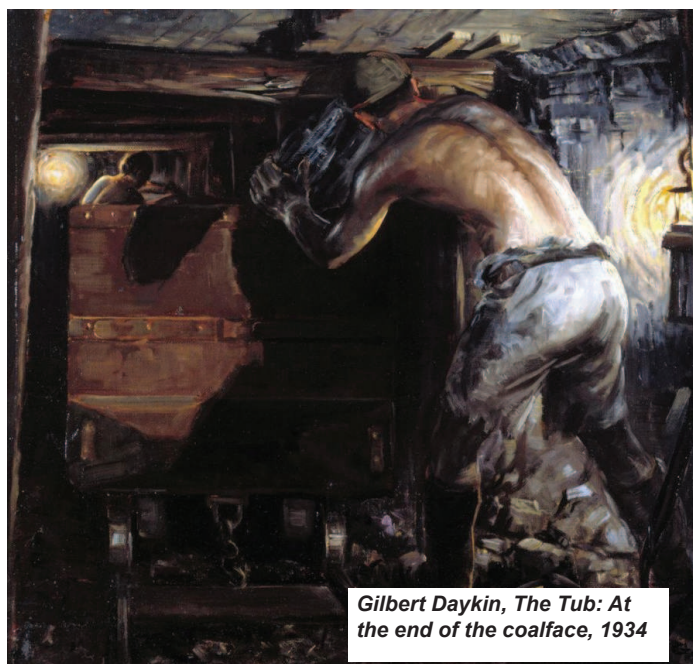
### Gilbert Daykin at the Cooper Gallery

*The Hidden Art of Barnsley* at the Cooper Gallery in Barnsley highlighted the work of coal miner and painter Gilbert Daykin. Daykin was offered a bursary from the local Miners' Welfare Committee to enable him to study part-time at Nottingham School of Art. His work was also brought to the attention of the then local MP Malcolm MacDonald, son of the Prime Minister. Daykin was invited to London and met the Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and the Duchess of Portland (she 'cared for' the Nottinghamshire Miners, an example of 'the heart-burnings of the aristocrat'). Daykin would appear on the front cover of the *Daily Mirror* on 3 August 1931. Daykin's 1938 oil *Symbolic-Miner Enslaved* is heroic and evokes Renaissance paintings of Saint Sebastian. His *Choke Damp* is quite macabre and underlines the dangers of working underground. *Markham's Ponies* portrays coal miners pushing a truck of coal while his *The Results of Labour* is a somewhat idealized portrait which had been commissioned by the Staveley Coal and Iron Company. Daykin could never afford to give up mining and concentrate on his art, and tragically was killed in a pit accident at Warsop Main colliery on 20 December 1939.

Seven miles from Barnsley is the old pit village of Goldthorpe where in 1984 during the Miners' Strike two teenage brothers Paul and Darren Holmes were killed while collecting coal when an embankment collapsed. In April 2013 an effigy of Thatcher was burned to celebrate her funeral. Since Goldthorpe colliery closed in 1994 the village has 'died' and the Goldthorpe and Highgate NUM Club is subtitled 'Lest We Forget' those from the 'great class war' that was the 1980s Miners' Strike. At NUM headquarters in Barnsley there is a monument commissioned by NUM Yorkshire Area, sculpted by Graham Ibbeson in 1992, and unveiled by Arthur Scargill, President of the NUM in July 1993 which portrays a miner, his wife, young daughter and a babe in arms, and says 'In memory of those who have lost their lives in supporting their union in times of struggle.'

Lenin was of the opinion that 'the field of art in particular should be imbued with the spirit of the class struggle being waged by the proletariat' which Barnsley culture could be said to demonstrate but tragically the Barnsley working class does not 'constitute itself as a class for itself' (Marx) as the area still elects four Labour MPs.

**STEVE CLAYTON**

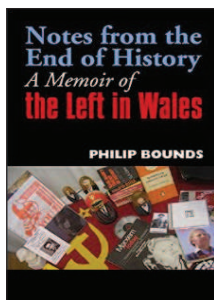


**Gilbert Daykin, *The Tub: At the end of the coalface*, 1934**



## Memories are made of this

**Notes From the End of History: A Memoir of the Left in Wales. Philip Bounds. Merlin.**



Philip Bounds is an historian and journalist and this is his memoir about being attracted towards – and involved in – radical politics and organizations in Wales. It focuses

mainly on the 1980s and 90s when he was growing up in a dynamic political environment punctuated by seminal events like the Miners' Strike of 1984-5. In particular, he tries to answer the questions 'Why has Marxism survived in spite of enduring so many defeats?' and 'What was it like to belong to the radical left at a time when Marxism was at its lowest ebb?'

In some ways, he gives a more coherent answer to the latter than the former question though it is interesting that his political journey started out attending meetings of the SPGB as a teenager. His accounts are at times funny and nearly always insightful, a flavour being his vivid description of his first ever political meeting, addressed by late comrade Ron Cook:

'I suppose he was the sort of socialist Orwell might have been too narrow-minded to appreciate. Grey haired, bespectacled and genial he came across like a university lecturer who had thrown it all up for a career in market gardening . . . I understood about a third of it but in my heart I embraced it all.' (p.62-3)

Bounds says that despite his admiration for the SPGB's vision of a peaceful, democratic socialist revolution (which has clearly stayed with him since) he moved on to associate with various of the more conventional organizations of the political left, saying of the SPGB that he was 'thrilled by its internal culture but dismayed by its lack of activism'. He ended up – perhaps bizarrely – in the Communist Party of Great Britain and then one of its successor organizations after its demise, the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), the group still associated with the *Morning Star* newspaper. The political journey he took, via meetings of the SPGB, an interest in the punk band Crass and the anarchist group Class War is a fascinating one, though

despite all his self-reflection in this book, it remains something of a puzzle that he chose to end up in the CPB. Indeed, it is very clear that he retains an affection not only for the style of politics of the SPGB but for the Party's insistence on majority democratic revolution and hostility to the totalitarian dictatorships of the former Soviet Union, China and North Korea, etc. These are dictatorships for which members of the CPB are normally want to retain something of a political affection.

At times there is a sense that Bounds wishes to challenge his readers to move beyond the stock-in-trade reformism and sloganeering of the far left. For instance, towards the end of the book there is a moving and insightful piece about the occasion he accompanied a poverty-stricken member of the CPB around Swansea late one night, as she rooted through leftovers behind a luxury hotel in search of free food to be distributed amongst those on her estate:

'With her gift for locating sources of free food in a hostile city and her uncompromising insistence that the booty be shared out equally among her kinsfolk, she gestured towards a past in which no one thought of themselves as better than anyone else and everyone said 'this is ours' but never 'this is mine'. In reminding us that communism had once been the natural order of things, she incarnated the hope that one day – at a much higher level of technology and culture and at a much lower level of superstition – we could do it all again.' (p.186)

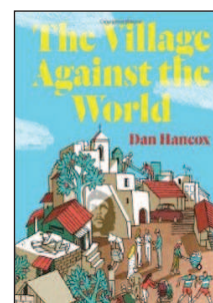
There is another way in which this book challenges the reader and pushes them further than they might otherwise have gone in their thinking. It is exceptionally well written and the prose flows beautifully. However, it is best to realise that amongst all this are often some very unfamiliar phrases and words. It is almost as if Bounds like to lull the reader into a false sense of security through the fluidity of his writing style before including something more challenging that will have readers running for the dictionary: 'aetiology', 'exegetically gifted', 'subfusc', 'manichean intuitions', 'marmoreal' and the wondrous 'gallimaufry of soporific guests' are but a random selection.

A highly entertaining and enjoyable memoir that deserves a wide audience, in Wales and beyond.

**DAP**

## A Co-op in Spain

**Dan Hancox: *The Village Against the World*. Verso £9.99.**



Marinaleda is a village of 2,700 people in the Andalusia region of southern Spain, about sixty miles east of Seville. Under the Franco dictatorship it was poor and underdeveloped,

like most places in the area, where massive landed estates owned by aristocrats prevailed. When Franco died in 1975, Spain began a transition to capitalist democracy. The people of Marinaleda organised in unions and demanded land; eventually, in 1991, the government gave them 1200 hectares of land belonging to a duke.

So began the development of what Hancox terms 'an anti-capitalist answer ... [a] community founded on mutual aid and collectivism, not the profit motive'. The village co-operative owns El Humoso, a farm several miles away. This is planted with labour-intensive crops such as cotton and sugar beet, thus providing more employment than the previous practice of growing crops such as corn that need little labour power. All co-op members earn the same wage, and any surplus is re-invested to create more jobs. There are no local police, the village is run by assemblies on the basis of direct democracy, and many villagers live in self-built homes for which they pay just fifteen euros a month. Each month the villagers work together voluntarily doing improvement work, such as gardening in the park.

Yet all is not quite what it seems. The regional government provides building materials and architectural assistance for the self-built homes, and also some kind of farming subsidy (unfortunately Hancox does not say much about this). The unemployment rate is much lower than the national average, but is still five to six percent. The present economic crisis in Spain has not left the village untouched, with regionally-based funding drying up, and there is insufficient money to pay the workers at El Humoso. The charismatic mayor, Juan Manuel Sánchez Gordillo, is taking a back seat and is powerless to solve the current problems.

Further, some rather unpleasant aspects of local life are mentioned. Two of the village's elected councillors



are from the PSOE (roughly the Spanish equivalent of the Labour Party). One of them tells Hancox that those who do not agree with the mayor (those who are not Gordillistas) do not bother to attend the assemblies, and many of those who attend do so as a way of getting work. Some opponents have felt uncomfortable staying in Marinaleda and so have moved to live elsewhere. Hancox comments that in this and other cases it is impossible to distinguish facts and gossip, leaving the reader with no idea of where the truth lies.

Marinaleda carries on some Andalusian traditions of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism, and shows that people can live without large landowners and capitalists. But it is not a socialist village, just one way of organising production to survive under capitalism.

PB



## Communities, International and Otherwise

THE CONCEPT of a community is generally viewed in a positive light. So people may speak approvingly of community involvement in some project, or community support for some idea. You may live in a thriving community, or one that is undergoing community regeneration.

Dictionaries offer various definitions of *community*, often along the lines of 'a social group residing in a specific locality and often having a common cultural and historical heritage' (adapted from dictionary.com). A community can be a place itself, or 'a social, religious, occupational, or other group sharing common characteristics or interests and perceived or perceiving itself as distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists'.

This last definition is the one that underlies such expressions as *the gay community*, *the Jewish community* or *the scientific community*. The common characteristics may include sexual orientation, language or religion, among others, and need have little or nothing to do with where people live. There is often an assumption here that members of communities of this kind do indeed share the same interest, whatever that may be. People may claim to speak for a particular community or to be community leaders, though it is not always clear on what basis such claims are made.

Benedict Anderson wrote a book on nationalism called *Imagined Communities*, since nations could not be

proper communities in any real sense. A similar point might be made about other uses of the word, such as *the business community*, which presumably points to the capitalist class, especially one within a particular country. They may share the interest of deriving profit from those they employ and of having their access to markets and trade routes defended. Yet they hardly constitute a community in any other way, and are often at each other's throats in terms of competition for sales and profits. They may resemble another group viewed in similar terms, *the criminal community*.

Another use, and a very frequent one, is *the international community*. This might be taken to refer to the General Assembly of the United Nations, but it usually has a rather more specific meaning. Noam Chomsky points out ([www.chomsky.info/articles/200209--.htm](http://www.chomsky.info/articles/200209--.htm)) that it often just means the United States and some allies and clients, and he refers to this by the label *Intcom*. The international community in this sense is those who rule the most powerful capitalist state plus those who hang onto its coattails. Whenever you read or hear about *the international community*, you should ask yourself who it really includes: does it perhaps mean a tiny but extremely powerful and influential group of people who do indeed see themselves as 'distinct in some respect from the larger society'? Of course, it is nice for them if they can pass themselves off as representing the consensus of the world's population. ►



### A Barrage of Farage

SWITCH ON the BBC news and chances are you'll be greeted by the sight of Nigel Farage's face, usually stretched out in a smug grin. The BBC's apparent response to accusations that it gives a disproportionate amount of airtime to UKIP has been to give it even more exposure, albeit with an expose of its seamier side. On *Panorama's The Farage Factor* (BBC1), steely determined reporter Darragh MacIntyre hopes to wipe the smile off Farage's fizzog.

Some of the dodgy practices MacIntyre reveals include Farage endorsing e-cigarettes after UKIP was given £25,000 by an e-cigarette manufacturer, and an allegation that Farage siphoned off more than his share of party funds to pay for his publicity campaign. The programme also points out that Farage co-chairs the 'Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy' group within the European Parliament, which includes openly homophobic and far-right members. Unfortunately, these claims aren't explored in enough detail, perhaps because UKIP advised its staff not to co-operate with MacIntyre's investigation. More vocal are the former members with a disgruntled axe to grind about

Farage 'stabbing people in the back' and how UKIP is his 'ego trip'. Farage describes them as 'the dregs of our rejects'.

Despite these concerns, UKIP's rise continues, with Farage leading the march to its mythical utopia, where society's ills have been magicked away along with immigration. UKIP's brutal and blinkered politics have found support partly because of Farage's slick, confident image. He realises that maximum media exposure drums up followers, especially if he plays up to his persona. Farage (like Boris Johnson) promotes himself as a likeable bouncer eager to crash through the usual way of doing things, but he still subscribes to the status quo, with his viewpoint being particularly harsh. And *The Farage Factor* shows that he behaves in the same self-serving, shady way as other politicians.

MIKE FOSTER



► The Socialist Party's Object speaks of the means of production being owned and controlled 'by and in the interest of the whole community'. This means what it says: all the people of the Earth will own the land, factories, offices and so on in common. And we will form a true community, one with shared interests but not distinct from or in opposition to anyone else or any other group. The global community of World Socialism will truly be a positive notion, offering support and opportunity for all those who are part of it.

PB

## from page 18

government banned the import of cotton textiles from India in order to boost the native textile industry. Tariffs, government regulation and war played a crucial role in the growth and spread of capitalism.

Capitalism can take various forms, including state capitalism, where the major industries are owned by the government. The degree of government interference can vary in its extent and its nature, but whichever variant exists it is based on class ownership, commodity production, the wages system and exploitation. So yes, it really is capitalism, and it needs to be done away with as soon as possible.

PAUL BENNETT

### SOCIALIST STANDARD INDEX FOR 2013

For a copy send 2 second-class stamps to: The Socialist Party, 52 Clapham High St, London SW4 7UN

## Declaration of Principles

*This declaration is the basis of our organisation and, because it is also an important historical document dating from the formation of the party in 1904, its original language has been retained.*

### Object

**The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.**

### Declaration of Principles

The Socialist Party of Great Britain holds

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (i.e. land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.

2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as

## Meetings

For full details of all our meetings and events see our **Meetup** site:

<http://www.meetup.com/The-Socialist-Party-of-Great-Britain/>

### East Anglia Regional Branch

2.00pm, Saturday 8 November  
*'Music, Recuperation and Capitalism'*  
Speaker: Stair  
The Reindeer Pub, 10 Dereham Road, Norwich NR2 4AY

### Kent & Sussex Regional Branch

2.00pm, Sunday 9 November  
*'Lessons of the First World War'*  
Speaker: Steve Clayton  
Martlets Hall (Griffin Room)  
Civic Way, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 9NN (about 6 minutes walk from Burgess Hill rail station)

### Yorkshire Regional Branch

2.00pm, Saturday 15 November  
Debate with the Alliance For Workers' Liberty  
Socialist Party Speaker: Bill Martin  
The Red Shed, Wakefield Labour Club, 18 Vicarage Street, Wakefield WF1 1QX

### West London Branch

8.00pm, Tuesday 18 November  
*'The UKIP protest vote: What does it mean?'*  
Speaker: Adam Buick  
Chiswick Town Hall, Heathfield Terrace, London W4 4JN

### Glasgow Branch

8.30pm, Wednesday 19 November  
*'The Hollywood Blacklist'*  
Speaker: Vic Vanni  
Maryhill Community Centre  
304 Maryhill Road  
Glasgow G20 7YE

### Socialist Party Head Office

Sunday 23 November 3.00pm.  
*'The Case Against Fracking'*  
Speaker: Darrell Whitehead.  
52 Clapham High Street, London SW4 7UN.

### East Anglia Regional Branch

12 - 4.00pm, Saturday 13 December  
The Quebec Tavern, 93-97 Quebec Road, Norwich NR1 4HY  
Business meeting with time for discussion

### West London Branch

8.00pm, Tuesday 16 December  
Seasonal Social  
Venue TBA

### Yorkshire Regional Branch

1.00pm, Saturday, 20 December  
The Victoria Hotel  
28 Great George Street  
Leeds LS1 3DL  
Seasonal Social

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a class struggle between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.

3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into the common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.

4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind, without distinction of race or sex.

5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.

6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organize consciously and politically for the conquest of

the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.

7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.

8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.



# 50 Years Ago

## A stretch of hard labour

THE NOISE and the ballyhoo are over for the time being, and another Labour government has scraped into power. The opinion pollsters can sit back with a sigh and claim vindication for their sampling methods, while Tory ex ministers can take the rest which, some of them have been unkindly hinting, their colleagues need so badly.

There is not much doubt that under Wilson's leadership the Labour Party has managed to paper over some of the cracks between its various factions and



fight generally as a well planned and disciplined force. By comparison, the Conservative morale sank lower as the campaign went on and the foolish remarks of such political clowns as Quintin Hogg must have been like so many plums dropping right into the Labour leader's lap.

Just like their Tory and Liberal opponents, the Labour Party fought the election on a mass of promises; promises to solve the problems which they promised to solve when they last rose to power nearly twenty years ago. Housing and health, pensions and peace, education and unemployment, all those things which workers are so sensitive about, were given a merciless hammering by Labour spokesmen up and down the country. It was an astute campaign, and it just succeeded.

But now that the pendulum has swung a little, let us ask ourselves how much Wilson's promises are really worth. Does he really stand much chance of remedying the countless ills which so many politicians before him have failed to remedy? *The Guardian* of October 12th called him "a man with a heart full of indignation and humanity" but what will they call him when we get the multitude of excuses when his government fails to deliver the goods? We have had excuses from the Labour Party before. We had them in 1924 and again in 1931, when they blamed their failures on to the lack of a working majority. Will they try the same line this time, when their majority is so small? Let us prick that particular balloon before it leaves the ground. The Labour Party have taken power in the full knowledge of their standing in Parliament. They say that they intend to give "strong" government and to carry out their full programme. They are confident now. Let them remember this when the time comes for apologies and excuses.

(from editorial, *Socialist Standard*, October 1964)

# ACTION REPLAY

## Seeing Red

IT GIVES you wings, according to the advertising slogan. That's the energy drink Red Bull, though the Austrian firm behind it is far more than just a soft drinks company. It owns a very successful Formula One motor-racing team and sponsors a series of air races that constitute a world championship. It has a US record label, Red Bull Records, but sport is clearly its main marketing tool in the quest to establish an exciting image for the brand. It spends about a billion euros a year on sports marketing, which helps it to sell over five billion cans of the stuff each year.

The main audience targeted by the advertising is young men who are into extreme sports of various kinds, and the company's ownership of sports teams is part of this whole campaign. In 2005 it bought an Austrian football team and renamed it Red Bull Salzburg: they won the league title by a mile in 2013–14.

In 2009 it bought a lower-league team in Leipzig, but this time it was renamed RB Leipzig to comply with sponsorship regulations (we should explain that the RB does not stand for 'Red Bull'). Supporters of other German clubs have complained that it does not follow the rules on clubs having members who express their views at general meetings. When they played RB at home, Union Berlin fans displayed a banner 'Football culture is dying in Leipzig'.

The drink (they are a drinks company, remember) is a minor variant on a beverage originally developed in Thailand. There have been claims that it poses a health risk, and it has been banned in some countries, though no risk has been conclusively demonstrated. It is the case, however, that since 2008 six athletes have died in Red Bull-organised events, from extreme skiing to motorbike racing.

Forty-nine percent of shares in Red Bull belong to Dietrich Mateschitz, who has an estimated net worth of over \$5bn and owns an island off Fiji. Red Bull gives him profits.

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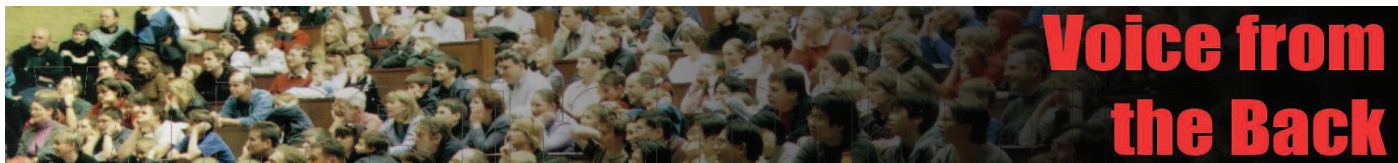
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# Voice from the Back

## Billionaires And Poverty

Millions of workers throughout the world struggle to survive but it is not all doom and gloom in capitalism— some people are doing exceptionally well. 'The population of dollar billionaires across the globe has increased by a net 155 to 2,325 in the past 12 months, according to the latest census....' (*Times*, 18 September). The Singapore-based Wealth-X, a consultancy that tracks the number of the extremely rich has come up with the following figures for billionaires: US 571, China 190, UK 130, Germany 123 and Russia 114.

## Spiritual Values?

One of the myths that religious leaders often like to support is that religious people are not concerned about material things and only spiritual values are of any worth. Despite this some of them do not too badly when it comes to money. 'Topping the Forbes list is Bishop David Oyedepo with an estimated net worth of US\$150m (about R1.6bn). He founded the Living Faith World Outreach Ministry in Nigeria which is Africa's largest worship centre with a seating capacity of 50,000. Oyedepo owns four private jets, a publishing company, a university, and a high school' (*Sowetan*, 18 September). To prove that Oyedepo is not unique - according to the United States entertainment conduit 'MonteOz', TB Joshua is only the tenth richest pastor in the world.

## An Awful System

Everyone is aware of the poverty of many children in countries in Africa and Asia but what is not as well known is the plight of many children in the USA. 'The persistent rise of child poverty in Massachusetts - confirmed by last week's census figures for 2013 - is the result of costly day care and housing, the proliferation

of low-wage jobs, and a labor market that can be difficult for young parents to break into, according to specialists in the field. Nearly one in six children in Massachusetts was growing up in poverty as of last year, data from the US Census Bureau show; in households with single mothers, it was one in four' (*Boston Globe*, 22 September). It speaks volumes for the awfulness of capitalism that such poverty exists in one of the most advanced countries in the world.



## Foodbank Reality

A PC site specialising on food issues has come up with some alarming statistics. 'Maidenhead town centre is a postcard-perfect vision of dreary British consumerism with its rows of coffee shops, Greggs bakeries, chain clothing stores and mobile phone shops. You'd be forgiven, then, for thinking a queue swelling at 9.20 AM on the high street was for some sort of flash sale. In fact, it was the queue for the local food bank. There's been a staggering 163 percent rise in foodbank use compared to the previous financial year, and over 900,000 adults and children have received three days emergency food and support. Despite signs of economic recovery, the poor have seen their income becoming

more and more squeezed. More people are relying on foodbanks than ever before (*MUNCHIES*, 22 September). So while politicians boast of an economic recovery this is the reality for many workers.

## Fantasy And Reality

From time to time the world's media turns its attention to such issues as climate change and the environment. We have such attention at present. 'World leaders including US President Barack Obama are holding a summit on climate change at the United Nations. The aim at the New York meeting is to galvanise member states to sign up to a comprehensive new global climate agreement at talks in Paris next year. 'Climate change is the defining issue of our time. Now is the time for action,' UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said ahead of the summit' (*BBC News*, 23 September). After millions of words are spoken and pious resolutions are passed we can confidently predict the outcome will be the same as in the past - nothing! As long as the profit motive is the driving force of capitalism the environment is of secondary concern.

## Meanwhile, Back On Earth

With India successfully placing a satellite in orbit around Mars local politicians were not long in basking in the glory. Narendra Modi, the prime minister, visited the Space Research Organisation and declared that India had a great scientific future. 'While Mr Modi is eager to use the success of the mission to trumpet India's economic and scientific prowess as a rising global power, critics said that the mission was a waste of money in a nation where 43 percent of children under the age of 5 are chronically malnourished and 33 per cent of its 1.2 billion people lack access to electricity' (*Times*, 25 September). Becoming a global power in a capitalist world where might is right is a higher priority.

## FREE LUNCH

